FICTION BY THE BEST WRITERS

F. FOSTER

leave me free to figure on the big fel-

"There's young Avery," remarked Hobart, stroking his chin. "He has with us three years now and knows the business pretty well. The only question is whether we could trust him to make estimates and put in bids on his own responsibility. He might put us in a hole if he made a

"James thinks Avery is the real thirg during business hours," answere Stanley. "All James has against him is that he seems inclined to be sporty. Spends his evenings playing billiards and poker, I believe."

"James 's like all head book-keepers over fifty. They think the young fellows under them should be as sober as a married man with nine children," was Hobart's comment. "The young fellows will have their fling. But to come back to business," he added, "why not give him a trial? Send him down the river and tell him to do the best he can for us. He can't break us, and if he turns out all right, we might take him with us some day.

Accordingly, next day, Frank Avery was told to get ready to go down the river on Wednesday, so as to be in time to put in a bid that was to be opened on Friday evening.

The news soon spread among his friends that he was in line to be promoted to a traveling man, and not the least hearty of the congratulations came from Jennie Wheaton, who had her own reasons for regarding Frank's success in life with particular interest. "I do hope you will be successful," she told him enthusiastically.

"Wouldn't it be nice if you got a con-tract all by yourself? I'm sure they

mean a good deal to him, and he de. We all play a liberal game."

it bids on, does it? You must not Remembering the play Maxwell had termined to be very careful in his es.

Apparently both Maxwell and Drabreak up our little game that way, you made shortly before, Frank just saw timates and make no mistakes. If he per were colonels, as each addressed know. That will never do."

Remembering the play Maxwell had made shortly before, Frank just saw timates and make no mistakes. If he per were colonels, as each addressed know. That will never do." mean a good deal to him, and he de. We all play a liberal game."

The same evening that Jennie of whom seemed to be very keen, but tured his advice, Frank was firm in dred. Frank took out all his money Wheaton was talking over the future had bad luck. As for Watkins, his his determination to go ashore next with the poly justified his explanation morning. Opposed to the repeated ar. the collection of the poly justified his explanation morning. Opposed to the repeated ar. were discussing the young man in the that he only played for fun at home; back room of a saloon in another part and as for the two colonels, Frank did of the same town. One of these was not think much of their skill as poker tion of Jennie's parting words: "Think

bart must have only just heard about it, and they are going to send one of their young men down there on the jump to figure on the fob. Now, you with the bad luck having left the boat see," he went on, sipping his whiskey, during the night. No one else being "they think it isn't much of a contract, available, the four sat down to play, or old man Stanley would go after it and Colonel Draper suggested that in himself. We can't get him into the stead of table stakes they should play way we try it. The regular good old-fashioned river Whether we can handle this young felgame; fifty cents, call a dollar; no there's one thing sure; if you can fix right or Jennie. "That's right," answered Colonel Draper. "Four of a kind is high, and call a sight for your pile if you want to; but if you borrow to call." "All right. Let her go!" was all Colonel Maxwell had to say, as he placed a handful of bills on the table. There was little change in Frank Avery's luck, and he gradually added low Avery or not, we don't know, but limit but the roof, any one having a to his winnings until he had severnly him it's our contract, and as I said be-time. it all fixed to get it. Stanley and Ho-mond ring, for Jennie.

bart must have only just heard about The next afternoon, when they as-

have to send two men down the river "And straight flushes are barred, fourwith him, and they would be gone two of a kind being the best hand out, regular old Mississippi style. That's the game for me! Nothing ever like it! Along toward midnight, Frank more. "Besides, it's a question." continued Hoadley, not noticing the interruption, the rest of the game was agreed to, like rest of the game was agreed to, whether we could hold the young fellow or not. There's some that you can catch, but they break away. Some you can put the screws on and make 'em do 'most anything if you get 'em dent that he could beat that game all the time.

Frank was too good a player to raise the process of the previous even the young fellow is a fighter," and the time.

Fortune certainly seemed to smile five as if it hurt him to do it. Watkins, on his left, had queens up, but did not raise the ante. No Maxwell just chipped, but Draper kings.

Frank was too good a player to raise the process of the previous even the process of the proce

some way so we can prevent him from got the pot away from three of a kind. Seeing that his opportunity for a bidding against us on that job. I don't "You had better stay on this boat," killing had come. Frank raised it a care whether he never gets near the remarked the barkeeper confidentially, hundred dollars, which he thought that

with the billows of brown smoke stacks belief, it would not be bar; "you don't get a chance like yours ration, or perhaps an almost impersupport of the smoke-stacks behind, and the ever-more'n twice in a lifetime. Why, I'd ceptible movement on the part of the question of calling the bets should be changing, but monotonous, shore in give five hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing, but monotonous, shore in give five hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing, but monotonous, shore in give five hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing, but monotonous, shore in give five hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing, but monotonous, shore in give five hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper, prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. Prompted Frank just to settled, there being now about two changing hundred dollars to take your barkeeper. melancholy moss-laden trees, is not as trip."
attractive as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the morn-

stove offered Frank a cigar, making they want it."

In his pockets and trying to count the and Frank were discussing the possional gamblers in my pay. My signs of fog. After chatting pleasantly formation that his name was Maxwell and the countries of the bear and the countries of the countries of the bear and the countries of the bear

and.

"Here's another," he sighed. "Our down the river and bild on that Hubbell contract. I'm getting tired of running all over the country after these small jobs. I wish we had some one we could trust to handle them and leave me free to figure on the big fel
"Soling to leave us!" exclaimed disaster that the barkeeper brought in the stoping out the whiskey.

"Going to leave us!" exclaimed disaster that the barkeeper brought in the style: black broadcloth suits, with Colonel Draper. "Why, my dear fel-disaster that the barkeeper brought in night. A thousand times he cursed the was in, between the contract and bimself for ever having gone into the safer same of table stakes, and then for his ning all over the country after these small jobs. I wish we had some one cline their invitation to join a game of of the business upon which he was en-to see what he had.

"Here's another," he sighed. "Our wastcoats, turn-down collars low, you must finish the trip with us. the last round of drinks and clgars, brought in the style black broadcloth suits, with Colonel Draper. "Why, my dear fel-disaster that the barkeeper brought in night. A thousand times he cursed the was in, between the contract and then for ever having gone into the same, believed to make a clean breast of the night. It was about balf an hour after this style: black broadcloth suits, with Colonel Draper. "Why, my dear fel-disaster that the barkeeper brought in night. A thousand times he cursed himself for ever having gone into the same, believe to was in black of the was in, between the contract and the night.

"There was no sleep for Frank that the barkeeper brought in night. A thousand times he cursed himself for ever having gone into the same of the was in, between the contract and the night.

It was about balf an hour after this style: black broadcloth suits, with colonel propers and the first say, and then for his night. A thousand times he cursed himself for ever having seems of the was in, black broadcloth suits, with the last content in night.

It w and so on through the whole gamut of vain regrets that every gambler in-dulges in after he has lost his money.

One thing he was resolved on; he was done with poker for all time. Morning came, and he was on the deck almost at dawn, looking for the appearance of the barkeeper, who was to find a man with five hundred dollars to loan for five minutes, to bet on a ffand that couldn't lose. Colonel Draper was the first to come into the saloon. He pulled out his watch, and then peered out of the win-

dow at the shore to see how far down

had just joined them. 'That's right, Colonel." he answered decisively, and then whispered confidentially to Frank: "Let that contract

As the minutes slipped away, Frank to the hotel ashore. How does that it. How can you lose?" felt himself going mad. When he asked strike you?" the barkeeper how soon that man with the money to loan would probably get in until I have figured on the job," re-up, all the answer he got was a shrug. plied Frank uneasily.

for Jennie," he thought to himself, "I don't bid on it, I am pretty sure of still, smiling at the tempter in a would chuck that contract and my job getting it and it is worth just about of him as if she were not afraid. thing else. With two thousand dollars sure that your firm bids a few dollars said Frank quietly. "That poker bet apital in my pocket, what do I care?" higher than I do. Now do you underIf it were not for Jennie! stand?"

tract all by yourself? I'm sure they stakes, so that he could not possibly would take you into the firm some day."

Hang the contract, "was Maxwells tion was how much he could win on day."

While Frank smiled at the importance which Jennic attached to such a triffe as one contract, he realized that the outcome of his first attempt might. All we want is to pass the time.

Well, who joined them just then.

"Hang the contract," was Maxwell's tion was how much he could win on decided to go ashore or stay and settle decided to go ashore or stay and settle immediate comment. "It must be some pleayure job in that town. Put that little bet. There was no hope of the man "under the gun," he contract, he realized that little bet. There was no hope of the man "under the gun," he added to go ashore or stay and settle decided to go ashore or stay and settle immediate comment. "It must be some pleayure job in that town. Put that little bet. There was no hope of the man "under the gun," he contract, he realized that little bet. There was no hope of the man "under the gun," he added to go ashore or stay and settle decided to go ashore or stay and settle immediate comment. "It must be some pleayure job in that town. Put that is all you can win as no mistake about getting it. Your the outcome of his first attempt might well. All we want is to pass the time. Firm doesn't expect to get everything and then the gen as a good deal to go ashore or stay and settle it. It was his last chance.

Well, when and asked him whether he had she were standing by him then.

"Then you'll produce that three hunder of the immediate comment. "It must be in the contract," was Maxwell's tion was how much he could win on decided to go ashore or stay and settle it. It was his last chance.

While Frank smiled at the import of the could win on the table in mediate.

"Then you'll produce that three hunder of the decided to go ashore or stay and settle it. It was his last chance.

While Frank smiled at the import of the could win on the could win on the could and asked him whether he had she were standing by him then.
ded to go ashore or stay and settle "Then you'll produce that three hunfreight and would not open the safe and see what they think of it."

again until the boat left the landing. then it flashed across him that, even

at the table.

Mr. Stanley was seated at his desk Draper—introducing him—was bound row morning, he says," remarked the ft at all, but he observed that Maxwell they would have to wait until morn-sahore also, and then he suddenly resolved to make a clean breast of the played the situation all right.

Some letters that he held in his Both men were dressed in Southern "Going to leave us!" exclaimed It was about half an hour after this There was no sleep for Frank that whole thing, telling Watkins the fix "How about that hid heing put in as

"Then I must get the money to call that bet somehow," exclaimed Frank.
"You saw my hand and you know it is a certainty. Can't you think of any "You write to the firm and tell than "You write to the firm and the write than "You write to the firm and the write than "You write to the firm and the write than "You write to the firm and the write than "You write to the firm and "You write to the way to raise the money? I will pay them," said Frank quietly. "My resyou a hundred per cent, interest—any-thing you want; but I must get out of this hole somehow."

Watkins, totally ignoring Frank's anx- his own. Give me your name and adlety about the poker bet.

"Yes, but good heavens! I must have five hundred to call that bet first. If I don't get it before I leave the boat, the river they were.

"You will never get this thing fixed up in time," he began. "The best thing you can do is to go on down the river with us and take your time about ty problem. "I'll tell you what I'll do. "What do you think, Tom?" this I couldn't raise enough money to call that het even if I had a derrick, and blowing for our landing now. But I'll tell you what I'll do," he repeated job go hang. There's two thousand slowly: "I'll call it square on the three dollars in that envelope for you if you hundred you owe me if you will agree stick to it. If you jump the boat, you to put in Stanley and Hobart's bid at don't get a cent of it."

a figure that I will name when we get a figure that I will name when we get

"I cannot tell what figure I shall put

When he asked the clerk how soon the boat was due at his landing, he was told in half an hour. "If it were not for Jennie," he thought to himself, "I don't bid on it, I am pretty sure of with Stanley and Hobart and every- three hundred dollars to me to be

destination now. The clerk came to town," he added, his voice suddenly kins with a sneer, "come up to the them and told them he was locking up changing in tone, "I shall state the de-hotel and have a cigar. You may the safe, as he had to attend to the taffs of this affair to your employers change your mind."

if he let the whole thing go and aban- "there's a gent on this boat, a friend if he let the whole thing go and abandoned that two thousand dollars, all of mine, says he'll loan you that five
he was actually losing was the ten if it's all right, but he won't get up for
as final. But I adhere to my determidollars he started with. The rest was about an hour yet. He will talk to you about it. Course he may want a The appearance of Watkins, all little rake off; but it's all right," and dressed for the shore, dispelled this the barkeeper winked. "You stay illusion instantly. How about the right here on the boat and you can't three hundred he had borrowed from lose." and the barkeeper gave Frank a "Before you do that, let

"How about that hid being put in as I say?" demanded Watkins, who was standing beside him waiting for the hotel porter to take his bag. "Do I write to the firm and tell the you owa

ignation goes by the same mail. I stay here and put in a bid for Stanley "So you are going to put in a bid and Hobart on my figures, and after for Stanley and Hobart?" continued that I guess the devil can take care of and Hobart on my figures, and after dress and you shall have that three hundred within a year, with interest."

"That's final, is it?" demanded Wat-I not only lose every cent of that two kins rather sharply. "Now let me thousand dollars but I can't pay you, bring you to your senses, young man. I told the clerk on the boat not to give up that money until to-morrow morning. According to the rules of gamthat bet even if I had a derrick, and bling you have twenty-four hours to I don't see any show for your getting find the cash to call a raise on sealed it in the next ten minutes—the boat's hands. Say you will put in that bid they way I want it-no one will ever slowly; "I'll call it square on the three know-and that two thousand dollars is yours. I will get the money to call the Colonel's raise if I telegraph for

> It seemed to Frank at that moment as if he were taking Jennie's hand from his arm and gently but firmly putting her aside. The next instant it was as if she were standing by him still, smiling at the tempter in front

"No, sir, not in a thousand years." That was all that held him to his "I do," said Frank briefly; "but I game forever. I have learnt my lesduty when Colonel Draper approached can't do it." He was thinking of what son and learnt it well. You shall have him just as the gong rang for break. Jennie would say to such a bargain if that three hundred with any interest you demand, but I shall put in that bid for Stanley and Hobart at my own

"Well, young man," remarked Wat-

Although Frank assured him there Before Frank could reply be felt a was no hope of any change in his de-Frank saw that the decisive moment hand on his shoulder and looked up to termination, he accepted Watkins's inhad come; to stay on the boat or to see the barkeeper standing behind vitation to go into his room at the hostay with Stanley and Hobart. Just him, tel. Watkins turned and closed the "Say, young feller." he whispered, door and motioned Frank to a seat.

> nation to report what has happened on this trip to your firm."

"Certainly," said Frank. "So shall

"Before you do that, let me tell you something that you do not know, Mr. Watkins sat down beside Frank reassuring slap on the shoulder. something that you do not know, Mr. table. "No, sir," was Frank's firm re- Avery. The poker game on that boat



poker; but they assured him that five gaged, only to have it lightly pooh-cent ante, so call ten, was all they poohed by the Colonel and also by played, and that the limit was table Maxwell, who joined them just then. He found four aces. With atraight flushes barred, that hand was a certainty. The only ques-

a professional gambler called Jim players, their game being a trifle too of me as if I were stand Hoadley and the other was a man liberal to be a winner, he thought, you, and you cannot lose."

After they had been playing for an hour or two, he found that the modest that less teams together the "There's two hundred dollars in it ten dollars that he had placed on the for you, Hoadley," remarked the caller table for his stake had increased to quietly, as he poured out a glass of about fifty, and he began to have Frank's whiskey. "We want that contract visions of various extravagances upon next day. whiskey. "We want that contract visions of various extravagances upon down the river, and we thought we had his return to town, among them a diamond the for Jennie.

will fight and break away. Perhaps

Fortune certainly seemed to smile five as if it burt him to do it. Wather young fellow is a fighter," and the upon Frank Avery to the exclusion of kins raised it fifty, on the principle of gambler looked questioningly at Willers.

"I don't know anything about that," some one that had two hig pairs. Every after some hesitation, and the dealer replied Willets, a little impatiently, time he got a flush he beat a straight just called, taking up the pack at the "All I want is to get the bulge on him and every time he filled a straight he same time to serve the draw.

Seeing that burt him to do it. Wather the same is the pack as if it burt him to do it. Wather the pack as if it burt him

care whether he never gets near the remarked the barkeeper confidentially, hundred dollars, which he thought that job at all, or whether he agrees to go when Frank went to get a cigar. "You the three men who were already in for in with us and put his figure high can give those fellows cards and seventy-five each would stand.

The colonel agreed to this on condition that there should be no further with the billows of brown smoke swift-feller," he whispered, leaning over the large and all expenses paid."

The upper deck of a river steamer, mind what I'm \$\frac{x}{x}\$ telling you, young the bar; "you don't get a chance like yours ration, Qr perhaps an almost impersal and put his figure high can give those fellows decided up. The colonel agreed to this on condition that there should be no further with the billows of brown smoke swift-feller," he whispered, leaning over the large with the bar; "you don't get a chance like yours ration, Qr perhaps an almost impersal to the upper deck of a river steamer, with the bar; "you don't get a chance like yours ration, Qr perhaps an almost impersal to the up of the bar; "you don't get a chance like yours ration, Qr perhaps an almost impersal to the parkeeper went off to seventy-five each would stand.

Watkins dropped like a shot. Coloniation that there should be no further watching into only saw the raise, watching into only saw the raise, watching on further value and the parkeeper went off to seventy-five each would stand.

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Watkins dropped like a shot. Coloniation that there should be no further to should be no furt

gument of his tempters that "the firm would never know," was his recollec-

When the four sat down to play their last game together that evening, nothing was said to Watkins about Frank's determination to leave them

"Same old thing, I suppose?" he de-manded as the cards were shuffled.

him it's our contract, and as I said be- time.

fore, it's worth two hundred if you can But if a man borrows to raise, he turedly, and seemed to enjoy the game other hundred.

One of the men sitting round the contract that is to be let Friday, and he found himself nervously fumbling late, and while Watkins, the barkeeper stove offered Frank a cigar, making they want it."

in his pockets and trying to count the and Frank were discussing the possisoms remark about the absence of any

Before the barkeeper could say any money he had left. There was only billity of getting a loan on the boat, the

were to underbid, the firm that got the contract would have to lose money on them both by that title. There were only two other men in the game, one winks with which the barkeeper puncture.

It spite of all the two colonels could gueen high hush, raised it hity more say, and in spite of all the knowing winks with which the barkeeper puncture.

The dealer dropped, but Draper, who had three kings again, put up a hundred by the colonels could gueen high hush, raised it hity more say, and in spite of all the two colonels could gueen high hush, raised it hity more say, and in spite of all the knowing winks with which the barkeeper puncture.

if he called the raise, he saw it, and Watkins dropped his flush. Colonel Draper asked for two cards of me as if I were standing beside and got a pair of fours with his three dollars. After some apparent hesitation, Draper raised him two hundred and fifty. The barkeeper pressed his

elbow against Frank's chair as if to say, "Now is your chance. You can't lose." To call for a sight with such a cer tainty in his hand as four aces would be folly. They would never be done laughing at him. Turning to Watkins, who was sitting on his left, Frank asked him if he would lend him enough to make a play, offering to show him his hand. After a glance at the cards, Watkins told Frank he could let him have all he had with him, as they were just going to quit any way, but it was

only about three hundred dollars. Frank took it and put it with his

must borrow to call," insisted Wat- just the same as if they were winning. It was now Colonel Draper's turn kins.

The barkeeper sat and looked on by to be out of cash, and he borrowed "Sure," responded Colonel Maxwell, spells, and lost no opportunity to whis- from Maxwell, who had won the big do the trick."

"Well." drawled Hoadley, as he kins.

The barkeeper sat and looked on by to be out of cash, and he borrowed belped himself to a cigar, "I should "Sure," responded Colonel Maxwell, spells, and lost no opportunity to whishave to send two men down the river "And straight flushes are barred, fourper to Frank to push his luck.

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The barkeeper sat and looked on by to be out of cash, and he borrowed belped himself to a cigar, "I should be a cigar, enough to boost it five hundred dollars

> No one at the table had enough money to loan to meet this raise, and Colonel Draper insisted that he would not take any mouth bets for it. He wanted to see the cash on the table, where his cash was, or he would take the pot. Frank had borrowed to raise, he said, and he would have to borrow to call. That was the rule of the game. While Draper was insisting on this point, Watkins rose from the table to have a few words with the barkeeper, who came forward with a proposition. If Frank Avery wished to call Colonel Draper's last raise, he thought he ought to be allowed to seal his hand in an envelope until he could raise the money, the Colonel's hand being also sealed up.

melancholy moss-laden trees, is not as trip.

"I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon the saloon "I must leave the boat in the mornative as the comfortable saloon the saloo



"THERE'S A GENT ON THIS BOAT SAYS HE'LL LOAN YOU THAT FIVE IF IT'S ALL RIGHT"